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Hope Renewed. By: Dzambukira, Proud. Faces (07491387), Dec2003, Vol. 20 Issue 4, p38-39, 2p, 1 color; Abstract: Presents a narrative of a Zimbabwean student on the importance of hope. Reading Level (Lexile): 960; (AN 11546821)

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Hope Renewed

"There will always be hope, hope a never dries up." Five years ago, in June 1998, I delivered the above words with the innocence of the child I was. I was being interviewed by David Moricca and Eric Farmer, who were shooting video footage for a documentary Meet Zimbabwe's Young Scholars, as part of the Zimbabwe Educational Outreach Project. They thought I had a remarkable story to tell. And I did. It was a tale of hope renewed. The memory of that day, which I have come to look back on as a milestone in my life, though still fresh in my mind, has a dreamlike quality to it.

In 1996, during the final year of my primary school education, my world collapsed. I suffered the same fate suffered by so many children in Zimbabwe today. My father, the sole bread winner in the family, died. With his passing, died my hope of proceeding with my education and being the sole architect of my future. I was in danger of being trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty that so many in my family had the misfortune of being held in. In Zimbabwe, education is the key to prosperity and happiness. I had not just lost my father; I had lost the key to unlocking the door to a happier future for my family and myself.

My hope was resurrected by Students for Students International, a student organization based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 1998 I was at a well renowned secondary school, trying to mould a better future for myself, my family, and in turn, for my community. I was very grateful and optimistic.

That was my story then. Today I have an even more remarkable story to tell. It is a tale of my journey since then. Of course I did exceptionally well in my studies — I had to. Not because I was particularly intelligent, but because I understood only too well the value of the education that I had almost been denied. My studies took me, at no expense to my family or myself, halfway across the country to one of the best schools in the region for the last two years of my high school education. There my eyes were opened to a wider world of opportunities, which deepened my gratitude and heightened my appreciation and outrage at the disparity that exists between the rich and the poor. I started grow ing up then. My resolve to make the most out of the opportunities available to me was thus steeled, but more importantly, I defined what, for me, has come to be a life statement: to balance the scale, to reach out and make available the same opportunities that I have had to children in circumstances to mine in 1996.

In 2002, during my final year of high school, my march into the future quickened. I was chosen to be a participant in the highly selective United States Student Achievers Program (USAP) that is funded by the U.S. Embassy. Each year this program assists thirty students from around the country to take advantage of the educational and personal growth opportunities available at some universities in the United States. I applied and was accepted into Harvard on a full scholarship.

This is my story today. In the fall of 2003, I traveled halfway around the world to Cambridge, Massachusetts to begin a new chapter in my life. It is impossible to look into the future without pausing to reflect on the past. Seven years ago my life, my hopes, and my dreams lay broken at my feet. Today, the future is full of boundless possibilities.

The happy contrast is humbling and gratifying. However, with the gratitude always comes the reminder that my happiness is not universally shared. So many people around me are still trying to put together the broken pieces of their hope.

There will always be hope, hope never dries up.

PHOTO (COLOR): Proud Dzambukira sits with David Moricca on his first day on the Harvard University campus.

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By Proud Dzambukira

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